

# Inventique®

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors

1 April 2004

## WRTI spreads the wwword...

CLUB WEBSITE A KEY SOURCE OF INFORMATION

**T**HE WRTI'S WEBSITE for inventors – [www.wrti.org.uk](http://www.wrti.org.uk) – is receiving over 1,000 hits per month just five months after being launched, writes WRTI's webmaster Mike Overy. Used for significant numbers of invention-related searches totalling tens of thousands of page-views, the site is indexed by most major search engines.

Thanks to a rolling system of upgrade and improvement, the site contains something of interest for everyone in the innovation industry, whether lone novice inventors, experienced innovators or full-blown entrepreneurial enterprises.

As anticipated, Inventors' Links is the most popular page, with many repeat visitors. This page acts as a one-stop directory of hot-links to hundreds of other sites – which are

all checked for relevance – of crucial interest to inventors.

Visitors can also subscribe to *Inventique* via the website. The free monthly newsletter is emailed to 1,500 named subscribers at support agencies, inventors' clubs, universities and research institutes, government departments, entrepreneurs and business schools. Inventors in 38 countries – including Argentina, Russia, United Arab Emirates and Japan – now receive *Inventique*. ■

● Contact: [www.wrti.org.uk](http://www.wrti.org.uk)

### Next WRTI meeting

**WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL**

WRTI member Dave Clements is this month's guest speaker, guiding the club through an 'innovation brain-storm' session.

### UK fourth in patent league

THE UK FILED 6,090 international patents – 5.5% of the total – using the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) in 2003, according to the IP industry watchdog *Technology Commercialization*.

The USA garnered 35.7% of the

Source: TC, Feb'04 edition, Vol.14 No.2

110,000 total with 39,250 filings, while Japan (16,774, 15.2%) took second place, displacing Germany (13,979, 12.7%) for the first time in over a decade. Japan's PCT filings increased by a record 24% in 2002. ■

● Contact: [Editortekcomm@aol.com](mailto:Editortekcomm@aol.com)

## Professor Day's 'head is spinning'

PROSPECTIVE WRTI MEMBER

Professor Avril Day FRAEs has successfully created a prototype of her latest invention – and hopes to launch it on an unsuspecting public in just twelve months' time.

The device, which will be marketed under the brand name WATme™ (an acronym of Wind-Assisted Cranial Turbine Mechanism), incorporates a number of unique design features for which patent applications have already been filed.

"What I've done isn't rocket science," said Avril, who is a Visiting Professor of Unsteady Aerodynamics at Southampton University's Space Centre, where she specialises in liquid-propelled ballistics technology. "Although it's a niche product in a small-target market, my work on orbital lobes means I'm confident of positioning my device in exactly the right place."

Avril, who lives in Shirley, intends to demonstrate a working model of the WATme™ at the WRTI's next monthly meeting.

"I can't wait to see the looks on everybodys' faces when I show it to them," she chuckled. "It's such a simple concept." ■

● Professor Avril Day is chief executive of the Italian intellectual property conglomerate Aprilis-Ineptus SpA.

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[www.aprilis-ineptus.com](http://www.aprilis-ineptus.com)

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Institute, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP



## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

WE WERE ALL disappointed that Dr Lester Simmons from the University of Reading was unable to present his talk on 'Making a business out of environmental sensors' as guest speaker at last month's WRTI meeting, because he was indisposed. We wish Lester a speedy recovery and look forward to hearing from him later in the year.

However, our deputy chairman Richard Little was an admirable substitute with his presentation on marketing and sales strategies. Richard's presentational style is most congenial and inclusive, yet he purveyed some serious, hard-hitting advice which was well received by all those present.

It was nice to see such a good turn-out last month, with quite a few new faces (Colin Bowler, Kerry Heslewood, Doug and Liz Murphy, David Robson and Peter Spurgeon). They are all involved in fascinating new technologies and we hope they will all become members of our club.

Thanks in no small part to the generosity of the Hampshire Economic Partnership Innovation and Enterprise Group, the WRTI will be taking a stand at *Innovention 2004* on Friday 25 June at the Intec Centre, Winchester, and at the Southampton Show in August. At least eight members will be showing their inventions at Intec and entering the innovation competition – which has a total prize value of £30,000.

This month's meeting will include a brainstorming session to review some of the astonishing ideas invented by Dave Clements. I hope to see many of you there.

Sincerely,

David

PROFESSOR DAVID NICHOLAS MBE, Chairman

INVENTORATOR David Beer

# We're no angels...

EARLY-STAGE INVESTORS WANT TO SEE A PROFIT

**B**USINESS ANGELS are a strange and disparate bunch of private individuals, with strange and disparate ideas about investment. They are certainly not 'angelic', but are looking for opportunities to make money.

However, private investors (which is what business angels are) are more likely to invest at the early stages of a business than conventional venture capital companies.

Here are a few hints on how best to attract them.

## First, the cons

For most inventors, and early-stage businesses generally, there are particular problems in raising equity finance.

● *It is often difficult to demonstrate a market for the product, and therefore the likely level of profit.*

Investors do want to see a profit, but have to go almost solely by gut instinct if no market is demonstrated. (There are probability-based models such as Monte Carlo which can help in the assessment of risk, but few private investors use them.)

● *There are unlikely to be any tangible assets that will allow the investors to minimise their risk.*

Intellectual Property can be an asset, but in the event of the venture's failure its value will depend entirely on the ability to find a buyer.

● *There are many inventors who have the entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen to turn an idea into profit – but not everyone possesses this different set of skills. If you don't, you'll need help.*

WRTI is seeking a Treasurer and a Membership Secretary. Interested members should email: [secretary@wrti.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wrti.co.uk)

## Now, the proactive

How do you deal with these issues?

**1 ● Do everything you can to demonstrate the market potential.**

If possible, support this by obtaining and including expressions of interest from future customers.

**2 ● Be prepared to listen.**

Almost without exception, investors have real experience in building profitable businesses. Learn from it.

**3 ● Accept that not all investors want to invest in early-stage companies – and even if they do, they will want to keep a close eye on where their money goes.**

This means they will want to join the Board, insist on expenditure controls and look for a regular flow of information from you.

**4 ● Understand that there is a tangible difference between an idea and a profit.**

This will affect the way investment is constructed and possibly involve a significant dilution in your share.

**5 ● Hone your presentational skills.** You need to be able to sell your idea.

**6 ● Try not to get too caught up in the technology, but focus on the profit opportunities.**

Spell out these opportunities in a lucidly written business plan.

**7 ● Set sufficient time and money aside for what could be a long fund-raising process.**

Nobody else shares your timescales.

**8 ● Seek expert help.**

Possibly from us? ■

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● David Beer is chairman of Beer & Partners, the largest and most successful business angel network in the UK. David is regarded as the leading private sector authority on the market and is a regular conference speaker on equity investment in unquoted companies.

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# BRANDS: VALUABLE IPR

**B**rands are valuable assets. To appreciate just how valuable, one has only to look at the amounts companies such as Pepsi and Coca-Cola spend on the maintenance and protection of their brands, writes *Dr Rosanna Cooper*. The Coca-Cola brand is one of the company's most valuable assets.

## Trade marks

A trade mark is the badge of a business, and protects any mark capable of graphical representation which distinguishes the goods and services of a company from those of another. It can be a logo, name, packaging, shape, signature or smell.

It is advisable to carry out trade mark searches in the UK and key markets when choosing a trade mark, to minimise the risk of infringement.

## Registering a trade mark

To obtain a UK trade mark registration, an application must be made to the Patent Office with the relevant fee. The description of the goods or services will fall within one or more of 42 classes on the trade mark register. The mark will be examined on both absolute and relative grounds: the test is whether the mark is distinctive and likely to infringe identical or similar marks, registered or pending, in respect of identical or similar goods or services.

An application will be refused if a mark is devoid of distinctive character. For example, an application

to register 'Computer Security' in respect of computer security services will be refused because it's descriptive.

Once registered, protection lasts for ten years and the registration is renewable every ten years thereafter.

The registered mark must be used – preferably in the form in which it is registered – to avoid cancellation for non-use. A trade mark owner has six months from the date of filing an application in the UK (the priority date) otherwise the priority date will be lost.

## Brands

Goodwill and reputation protect the brand (unregistered trade mark) of a business. An injunction can be brought for the unauthorised use of an unregistered trade mark.

## Use of symbols

The symbol ® means a mark is registered, whereas the symbol ™ denotes that the mark is unregistered. It is a UK criminal offence to use the symbol ® if a mark is not registered.

## Main trade mark regimes

If an inventor plans to register a mark in key markets, a regime (or combination of regimes) should be selected to reduce costs. Several regimes are available:

**UK Trade Mark System:** It can take up to 12 months to obtain a UK trade mark registration.

**The Madrid Agreement:** This international system allows an

ROSANNA COOPER  
CLARIFIES THE LEGAL  
POSITION FOR  
INVENTORS AND  
ENTREPRENEURS

inventor to make one international application denoting all countries in which protection is sought (who must all be parties to the agreement).

The application goes through various stages and the applicant obtains a bundle of national trade mark registrations. All EU countries, the USA and Japan are signatories to the Madrid Agreement.

The advantage of this system is that it reduces the upfront costs, as trade mark rights only extend to the countries in which they are registered (the alternative would be a single application in each key country).

## The Community Trade Mark:

The CTM allows an applicant to make a single trade mark application to obtain one registration covering all EU countries; application can be made through the UK Patent Office or the Community Office.

The application will be examined on relative grounds only. This means that the examiner only applies the test of whether the mark is distinctive enough to be afforded registration. If the application is refused, this applies throughout the EU: the mark will not achieve CTM registration. ■

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'Brands' is concluded next month...

● *Dr Rosanna Cooper is a partner at RT Coopers, a commercial law firm focusing on inventors and business start-ups.*

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## Easter Bonnet caption competition

INVETERATE WRTI INVENTOR Brian Stickley had what he termed "a cracking new idea" last month: a special hat to help people with impaired hearing. Brian thinks it's a winner: "It doesn't use batteries, is very cheap to make and it doesn't look stupid..." Before the poor chap files a patent application, however, he requires a snappy description for the Abstract. Any ideas, readers? The winning entry will be published.

● Email: editor@wrti.co.uk



## BORN IN THE USA

INVENTOR AND AUTHOR JAMES E. WHITE'S  
IRREVERENT VIEW FROM ACROSS THE POND

# Hard knocks



**W**ELCOME to a new world, fellow inventors. This is the first in a series of occasional columns on how to really goof up at inventing. The hope is that the lessons learned from others' mistakes will keep you from making a few of them (hope springs eternal, anyway).

The reality is this: you're a fool if you think you can succeed as an inventor – so *QUIT NOW* (not the reading, the inventing). That's the best advice I can give you.

You won't take that advice? Pity. Well, when you're £500 down and sweating bullets your partner doesn't find out, don't claim you weren't warned.

Sweating bullets? Do any of you *understand* American English?

### But seriously, now

The bottom line is that less than one-in-1,000 wannabe inventors will succeed – and that 'less than one' won't be you.

Thus, learning how to play the game so as to minimise one's losses will be to your distinct advantage. That's what I preach and that's my perspective with all my advice.

(That's also not a politically correct perspective to have in the USA nowadays, so be forewarned: abandon PC-ness in Great Britain now and save yourselves while you still can...)

I run screaming from all those inventors who brightly approach

me, beaming: "I've got my patent! Umm... now what?"

*Now what?* Now you throw it away and start over (or hope for luck). The *correct* steps to take, as I enumerate them, are these:

**0 • Go shopping:** Look for any existing solutions to the problem your invention solves. Stop at any stage where proceeding is found to be a poor business decision (such as discovering that a better solution than yours is already out there selling).

**1 • Ask people:** Use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to get feedback from knowledgeable people, such as real prospective buyers, users, or experts in the appropriate field. The odds on intellectual theft are almost zero, because your idea is either old or stupid or will take far more time and effort than any thief would willingly give it.

**2 • Get evaluated:** Preferably use a service (under NDAs) that really understands commercialisation and marketability but won't stand to gain by being positive. Avoid scam evaluations. Do a thorough search for prior art.

**3 • Determine manufacturing costs:** Find four similarly-made items already on store shelves and ask whether a solution to the problem you solve would be easily worth their average price to buyers. If not,

manufacturing costs are too high. Stop if 'unobtainium' is required. Use NDAs with outside help.

**4 • Design and prototype:** Fun! Build, test, simplify, redesign, simplify, compare against 'what the customer wants' criteria (not your own). Simplify again until you have a looks-like, works-like prototype. Use NDAs with outside help.

**5 • Sell a few:** File your patent application but don't start it on the examination track just yet. Find a short-run process that can make real quality products and get some made even if it costs far more than what you can sell them for. Try selling them at the retail price.

**6 • GO!** If they sold readily enough for the invention to appear commercially viable, get your business going. Don't forget to get the patent application examination process started before your application is considered abandoned.

In my next column, we'll visit the 'ten-years-too-early' patent... ■

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● James E. White is an inventor and author of *Will It Sell?* – how to determine if your invention is profitably marketable (before wasting money on a patent).

[www.InventorHome.com](http://www.InventorHome.com)  
[www.willitsell.com](http://www.willitsell.com)

Readers should note the differences in patenting between Europe and the USA: in Europe it is 'first to file', not 'first to invent'.

### Patent searching clinics

● FREE BRITISH LIBRARY patent searching clinics are available for those requiring help in finding patent information on the web. Clinics are held once a month at the British Library's St Pancras site in central London.

Dates for 2004 include 14, 28 April, 12, 26 May and 9, 23 June. Each clinic covers basic patenting procedures, choosing a database, good searching techniques, a practice session and a tour of British Library's patent reading rooms.  
<http://www.bl.uk/services/information/patents/clinic.html>

**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE** Sycamore Innovation Management

## The inventor's friend

A SUPPORT AGENCY RUN BY TWO INNOVATORS

**F**OUNDED FIVE years ago by directors David Croucher and Chris George, Sycamore Innovation Management (SIM) assists inventors by taking their ideas from first concept and development all the way to market.

The Portsmouth-based company was originally formed as a business vehicle for progressing its directors' own innovative products, but has now evolved into an umbrella organisation which provides advice and assistance through a wide-ranging network of associated consultants, market experts and innovation champions.

### One-stop shop

This resource-base allows Sycamore to call on experts to assist with advice on company formations and financial planning, intellectual

property, joint venture negotiation, sourcing funds and finding relevant manufacturing and R&D solutions.

SIM is licenced to offer The Virtual Company (TVC) scheme to the inventors in its client portfolio, whose businesses range from offshore wave energy and tyre recycling schemes to tricycles for children with special needs.

"The company deals with a wide variety of inventors," said director Chris George. "All have very different personalities – and most have little or no funding to develop or exploit their ideas. That's where we come in."

● **Sycamore Innovation Management**  
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### CASE STUDY OFFSHORE WAVE ENERGY LIMITED

**OFFSHORE WAVE ENERGY** was formed three years ago as a TVC 'virtual company' after Professor John Kemp was introduced to Sycamore Innovation Management by Professor David Nicholas MBE.

OWEL completed a DTI Smart-sponsored feasibility study before a grant from the Carbon Trust enabled the company to take its 150m-long OWEL Wave Energy Converter forward into full development. In addition to the CT grant, SIM has also attracted inward investment of over £100,000 from joint venture partners. [www.owel.co.uk](http://www.owel.co.uk)

### BOOK OF THE MONTH

#### Conquerors of Time

Exploration and invention in the age of daring by Trevor Fishlock

ISBN 0719555175 John Murray £25

*'It gives the lie to those doomsayers who had no faith in new inventions'*

– Professor David Nicholas MBE.

### WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

#### www.googlealert.com

*'A free custom-search service that emails you when new results appear.'*

*Especially useful for tracking developments in your specific field of interest or to find out what people say about you or your competitors. Just enter specific search phrases in quotes, eg "Wessex Round Table of Inventors" – Mike Overy.*

### MEMBER SERVICES

Entries in this column are free to WRTI Members, who should mail their details to the Editor (see panel at foot of page).

**CONCEPT TO MANUFACTURE.** Help with presentation, prototyping, technical & manufacturing issues. Contact: Innovate Product Design, 01722 410 295

**ELECTRONICS CONSULTANT** with 30 years experience, specialising in wireless and positioning technologies. Contact: Mike Overy, 01420 562378 [mike.overy@zen.co.uk](mailto:mike.overy@zen.co.uk)

**ELECTRONICS ENGINEER** Concept to proof of principle. Ex- scientific civil servant. Own lab. Contact: Mike Wright, 01428 722833 [mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk)

**INNOVATION CONSULTANT** and trainer specialising in TRIZ, author of *How to Invent (Almost) Anything*. Contact: Graham Rawlinson 01403 871 321 [Graham@dagr.demon.co.uk](mailto:Graham@dagr.demon.co.uk)

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